

Trinidad Express, February 24, 2010.

I just came back from Miami and as I was unpacking I found a white paper in my passport. It is the I-94 and I think that I was supposed to give it to somebody when I left the States. So what can I do now? Will this affect my future travel? Can I take it to the Embassy?

Danzell in Diego Martin

All who travel to the United States need to know that, when you leave our country, you are required to submit an I-94 Record of Departure to the Customs and Border Protection officers at the airport. This document serves as a record of your departure and is how our government keeps track of travel. The I-94 is a small, white paper on which you record some personal information, and can be difficult to keep track of because of its size, which means that Danzell is not the only one facing this problem.

The short answer is that, yes, if you do not submit the I-94 when you exit the United States, then you may have problems the next time you attempt to enter the United States. Generally speaking, however, if you left the United States on a major air or sea carrier, it is relatively simple for our government to verify whether or not you left the country, so you can rest easy and know that no further action is required of you. The real problem arises if you leave via private vessel or plane or via a land route, which are more difficult to verify.

So, if you departed the United States on a private vessel or plane or overland, what should you do with your I-94? First, do not bring or mail your I-94 to the Embassy. If you do, then our staff will give/send it back to you. If you still have your I-94, then you should mail it to

DHS - CBP SBU
1084 South Laurel Rd.
London, Kentucky 40744
USA

You should also include whatever proof you can find that demonstrates that you actually left the US when you say you did, along with an explanation of why your I-94 was not returned. This could include a boarding pass from your flight or an entry stamp in your passport. In any case, make sure that you have a copy of whatever you send so that the next time you try to enter the US, you will be ready to answer any questions our immigration officials may ask.

In case you forget some of these details, all of this information is on our website at http://trinidad.usembassy.gov/returning_the_i-94_or_i-94w_form.html, or if you have more questions about the I-94 go here <http://www.cbp.gov/>. You can also read all of our previous Ask the Consul columns at http://trinidad.usembassy.gov/ask_the_consul.html.